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FM AMEMBASSY SANTO DOMINGO
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 4099
INFO RUEHZA/WHA CENTRAL AMERICAN COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUEHWN/AMEMBASSY BRIDGETOWN PRIORITY 1870
RUEHCV/AMEMBASSY CARACAS PRIORITY 0562
RUEHGE/AMEMBASSY GEORGETOWN PRIORITY 0818
RUEHKG/AMEMBASSY KINGSTON PRIORITY 2528
RUEHPO/AMEMBASSY PARAMARIBO PRIORITY 0960
RUEHPU/AMEMBASSY PORT AU PRINCE PRIORITY 4170
RUEHSP/AMEMBASSY PORT OF SPAIN PRIORITY 1623
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEHC/DEPT OF LABOR WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEATRS/DEPT OF TREASURY WASHDC PRIORITY
RUCPDO/USDOC WASHDC PRIORITY 1473
RUCOWCV/CUSTOMS CARIBBEAN ATTACHE MIAMI FL PRIORITY
RUEAHL/CHS DHS WASHDC PRIORITY
RUMISTA/CDR USSOUTHCOM MIAMI FL PRIORITY

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STATE FOR WHA, WHA/CAR, WHA/EPSC, INR/IAA, EB, EB/IFD/OMA,
; USSOUTHCOM ALSO FOR POLAD; TREASURY FOR OASIA-J LEVINE;
DEPT PASS USTR; USDOC FOR 4322/ITA/MAC/WH/CARIBBEAN BASIN
DIVISION;
USDOC FOR 3134/ITA/USFCS/RD/WH; DHS FOR CIS-CARLOS ITURREGUI

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SUBJECT: DOMINICAN ELECTIONS 2006 SERIES #4: POLL SHOWS
FORMER POLICE CHIEF AS ONE OF THE MOST POPULAR FIGURES

[1](#)1. (U) This is the 4th cable in a series reporting on the
upcoming elections in the Dominican Republic .

Poll Shows Former Police Chief as One of the Most Popular
Figures

President Leonel Fernandez currently stands as the most
popular political figure in the Dominican Republic with 60
percent of the urban and rural community preference. This is
according to a national poll Hamilton, Beattie and Staff
carried out from March 3rd through the 7th for daily
newspaper Listin Diario. Most newsworthy and probably most
distressing for human rights supporters is the result that
former Police Chief General (ret.) Pedro de Jesus Candelier
currently is second in the poll. He is most popular among
Dominicans from the southern region of the country with a 66
percent approval.

Candelier served as Chief of the National Police from
February 1999 to January 2002. Human rights groups blamed
his tough approach ("la mano dura") for more than 500
extrajudicial killings of alleged criminals by police. His
reputation as a dangerous enforcer was such that in December,
2004, as the peso fell precipitously, in a tactic of blatant
intimidation, President Hipolito Mejia named Candelier as the
head of a group to investigate exchange houses. Mejia went
before the press, pointed to Candelier and growled, simply,
"And you all know this gentleman!"

In June 2005 various journalists speculated that Candelier
was interested in entering politics and even running for
President. Writers compared his ambitions with those of
Venezuela's Hugo Chavez. In 2005 Candelier was under

investigation, along with four other former police officials, for his role in the distribution to police, military and civilian officials of recovered stolen vehicles.

Despite this negative history, only 27 percent of the Dominicans living in the southern region oppose him. In the National District and the province of Santo Domingo 57 percent find Candelier acceptable. He has a 53 percent approval rating in the North and 52 percent acceptance in the East. Overall, men and women view Candelier the same way, with 58 percent approving.

Of persons between the ages of 30 and 39, Candelier has a 63 percent acceptance rate, with 31 percent of this group opposing him. From the upper echelon of society, 78 percent view Candelier favorably. This rate declines to 57 percent with the middle class and just a little more than 52 percent with the lower class.

The patterns are similar across the political parties. Approximately 65 percent of Social Christian Reform Party (PRSC) followers see Candelier favorably. Approximately 54 percent of Dominican Revolutionary Party (PRD) sympathizers and 58 percent of Dominican Liberation Party (PLD) supporters have a favorable opinion of Candelier. Candelier received the most opposition from PRD supporters with 38 percent and PLD with 29 percent.

While Fernandez and Candelier lead the political popularity pack, it appears that former President Hipolito Mejia does not have a bright future in politics. The poll shows that Mejia is the most disliked. Approximately 73 percent of Dominicans oppose Mejia while only 23 percent view him

favorably.

Other public figures with good numbers in the poll include former Vice President Jaime David Fernandez (PLD), who received most support from the upper class in the National District and from men; former senator Amable Aristy Castro (PRSC) with greatest approval from the upper and middle classes; and former Secretary of State Danilo Medina (PLD); the presidential chief of staff.

Local radio stations are playing a vigorous bachata tune these days, with a refrain consisting principally of the repetition of Candelier's name. It is easy to build a scenario in which he offers himself as a "non-partisan" hardline presidential candidate to the divided opposition; it is more difficult to imagine him creating a rival structure. Since no one else looks to have the stature to face up to Leonel Fernandez in 2008 -- assuming that the President confirms an ambition for another term -- Candelier could also serve as the fall guy, a prospect that the ruling PLD would probably relish.

12. (U) Drafted by Neda Brown, Michael Meigs

13. (U) This piece and others in our series can be consulted at our SIPRNET web site (<http://www.state.sgov.gov/p/wha/santodomingo>) along with extensive other material.

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